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February 26, 1959

General Goodpaster

Summary and Analysis of Khrushchev's
February 24 Speech

I enclose, at the Acting Secretary's request, a summary and analysis of Khrushchev's speech prepared in the Department. Mr. Herter thought that the President might wish to read this paper.

John A. Calhoun

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Comment on Khrushchev Speech of February 24

Berlin and Germany. Khrushchev's speech is the first high-level Soviet reaction to the Western notes of February 16 and probably indicates the line of the formal Soviet answer to these notes. The salient points are as follows:

Khrushchev in effect rejected the Western proposals for a conference on all three counts: agenda, participants and level of negotiations. Regarding the level of negotiations, Khrushchev turned down (but not categorically) a foreign ministers meeting and asserted it would be "more expedient" if agreement were reached on a meeting of the heads of government "of the powers concerned." This probably marks the beginning of a new summit conference campaign.

Khrushchev did not spell out the Soviet position on participants of a summit conference but strongly indicated the USSR would demand parity, perhaps with the USSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia and East Germany matching the four Western powers "concerned."

On an agenda, Khrushchev once again strongly rejected any discussion of German reunification by the four former occupying powers and reiterated the Soviet position that this can be only decided by the "two Germanies." He argued that as long as the West accepts East and West Germans at the proposed conference in a consultative status (which is "already some kind of factual recognition" of the GDR), it should take the next logical step and let the Germans solve reunification themselves. He proposed instead that a summit meeting should be held first and foremost to "reach agreement" on a German peace treaty and a solution of the Berlin problem, and also to "examine" questions concerning European security and disarmament.

Continuing the line presented in his speech in Tula, Khrushchev connected the question of Berlin with a separate peace treaty, asserting that "when the peace treaty is concluded with the two German states, or with one of them, the agreement on the division of Berlin into sectors, and hence on its occupation status, will ipso facto finally fall away."

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Authority

MR 80-142 #1

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Of the two possible interpretations of this line -- either it is a bluff which will give the Soviets an "out" should they decide not to transfer access controls (i.e., delaying the transfer to "negotiate" a peace treaty with the GDR), or it is an indication that if East-West talks on the points at issue fail to reach agreement, the Soviets will quickly conclude a separate peace treaty in order to buttress the East German position regarding Berlin -- the latter would appear to be the more likely.

Khrushchev reaffirmed the Soviet "free city" proposal and added no new embellishments. He strongly reaffirmed Soviet readiness to defend the GDR against military encroachments. However, he did not make the latter statements in the context of the Berlin situation and failed to mention the question of a turnover of access controls.

Khrushchev's remarks indicated that two objectives are uppermost in his mind in calling for a conference: (1) to strengthen the Communist hold on East Germany and elsewhere in Eastern Europe by gaining Western acceptance of the status quo (Soviet style) in Eastern Europe, in particular the existence of the East German regime, and by undermining the West's position in Berlin, and (2) to inhibit West German rearmament. The following passage was significant: "We want one thing, to preserve and consolidate everything that is new and was formed after the hard war against fascism and which puts forth definite guarantees that any new aggression by the revenge-seeking forces of German militarism will receive a crushing rebuff."

Our overall impression of the speech is that it offered no "give" or softening whatsoever in the Soviet position on Germany and Berlin. Despite repeated warnings from the West and three days of talks with Macmillan, Khrushchev appears completely unyielding. This hard-line attitude does not, of course, prove that the USSR will never give an inch on its Berlin position; it does suggest that the international tension will have to get much higher before the USSR will retreat from what Mikoyan called "a good position." All of this indicates that Moscow will assume a tough bargaining position in its answer to the February 16 notes and is confident that eagerness in the West for negotiations will result in a conference on close to Soviet terms. The desire to exert pressure in this direction on Prime Minister Macmillan was probably the primary reason for the timing of the speech.

Nuclear Tests.

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Nuclear Tests. Khrushchev was unyielding in discussing all major disputed issues in the Geneva talks. He made the most categorical and most authoritative Soviet prediction to date that the conference would fail, indicating an impending campaign to tell the "Western public frankly" that the US and UK Governments do not want agreement and want to resume testing. He stated that the USSR would likewise resume testing in the "interests of our security." Khrushchev did not, however, indicate an intention of initiating a rupture of the Geneva talks, asserting that "as far as we are concerned we will not stop." His calculation may be that a Western initiative to recess or break off would tend in the public mind to obscure the fact that the unyielding Soviet position on controls was responsible for the deadlock.

Macmillan Visit. Khrushchev's main emphasis in commenting on the British visit was on Soviet readiness to sign a non-aggression pact, referring to the subject three times in a relatively brief passage. The proposal of course is an old one, but Khrushchev doubtless is aware that it has evoked some sympathy in Britain. By raising it in public at this time he presumably hopes to put pressure on Macmillan. Possibly, his remarks indicate that he found Macmillan less interested than he had expected.

Middle East. (Both an extemporaneous and an official version of these portions of the speech are available. The difference is largely in syntax.) On Iran, Khrushchev's chief purpose seemed to be to tone down the sharp remarks in his Tula speech, possibly in response to Iranian protests against recent Moscow propaganda. He averred that the USSR is not going to "prompt" the Iranian people. But he also sought to maintain pressure by again charging that the Shah is afraid of his own people and fears a repetition of the Iraqi events. On the UAR, Khrushchev sought to restore a friendly atmosphere by promptly expressing his satisfaction with Nasser's February 23 speech. But he again indicated support for local Communists by reaffirming his 21st Party Congress complaints against the attacks on Communists in the UAR. He promised continuing support to Iraq, though his statements, by being neither more nor less friendly than those regarding the UAR, were evidently designed not to raise Nasser's suspicions regarding Soviet aims vis-a-vis Baghdad. He hinted a possible future meeting with both Nasser and Kassem.

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These comments on the UAR and Iraq suggest that Khrushchev wishes to smooth out recently ruffled relations with the UAR. However, he gives no sign that the USSR will change its basic position as stated at the 21st Party Congress of supporting Middle Eastern Communists even at the cost of good relations with these governments. It seems likely, therefore, that UAR-USSR relations will continue to be troubled by outbreaks of friction, most especially over the situation in Iraq.

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